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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 ACDA-07 SAJ-01 SAM-01 IO-13 /091 W
---------- 045280
R 220741Z APR 76
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6720
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2970

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, MPOL, KS, UK, US
SUBJECT: VISIT OF BRITISH DEFENSE SECRETARY TO ROK

1. BRITISH SECRETARY STATE FOR DEFENSE ROY MASON
PURSUED BUSY APRIL 19-21 SCHEDULE IN ROK, INCLUDING
SESSIONS WITH PRESIDENT PARK, PRIME MINISTER CHOI,
DEFENSE MINISTER SUH, AND VISITS TO UNITED NATIONS COMMAND
(UNC* AND KOREAN FORCES IN DEMILITARIZED ZONE (DMZ) AREA.

2. IN COURSE APRIL 21 PRESS CONFERENCE, SECRETARY MASON STRESSED
DEPTH BRITISH EXPERIENCE IN FIELDS MILITARY TECHNOLOGY AND
DEFENSE INDUSTRIES, AND FOCUSED ON U.K. WILLINGNESS TO
COOPERATE" WITH ROKG IN ASSISTING REPUBLIC'S IMPLEMENTATION OF
ITS MILITARY MODERNIZATION PLANS. HE SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED ARMS
SALES AND DEFENSE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT WITH KOREAN HOSTS, BUT
REFUSED COMMENT RE SPECIFICS, SAYING "FIRST, IT IS UP TO THE
KOREAN GOVERNMENT TO DECIDE WHAT IT WANTS. SECONDLY, WHY ALERT THE
POTENTIAL ENEMY TO THE EQUIPMENT IN WHICH YOUR GOVERNMENT IS
INTERESTED?"
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3. AMBASSADOR, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH SECRETARY MASON AND ACCOMPANYING NAVY SECRETARY DUFFY, DID NOT GET IMPRESSION THAT SPECIFIC ARMS SALES AND DEFENSE INDUSTRY PROJECTS HAD BEEN TACKLED DURING VISIT ITSELF, THOUGH OFFERS TO AID ROK MILITARY MODERNIZATION WERE MAJOR ELEMENT OF STAY AND WILL BE FOLLOWED UP. MASON WAS OBVIOUSLY EXTREMELY IMPRESSED BY KOREAN DEFENSE PREPAREDNESS AND DETERMINATION, AND EXPRESSED OPEN ADMIRATION FOR TOUGHNESS AND CALIBER OF ROK TROOPS. HE WAS ALSO MARKEDLY AFFECTED BY SERIOUSNESS OF NORTH KOREAN THREAT AND AURA OF TENSION IN DMZ AREA. AMBASSADOR DESCRIBED KOREAN FORCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (FIP) AND U.S. POSITION REGARDING IT TI SECRETARY, WHO APPRECIATED PRESENTATION.

4. COMMENT: KOREAN MEDIA MADE NEW DEPARTURE IN PUBLICLY PLAYING UP POSSIBILITY OF MAJOR THIRD COUNTRY DEFENSE PURCHASES. UNNAMED "MILITARY OBSERVERS," "PLANNERS", AND OTHER "SOURCES" WERE USED TO SUPPORT THEME THAT, WHILE KOREA HAS SO FAR DEPENDED HEAVILY UPON THE U.S. FOR ARMS, GREATER "DIVERSIFICATION OF ARMS TRADE PARTNERS" IS ENVISIONED IN CARRYING OUT FIP. MISSION OFFICERS WILL BE SEEING SOME OF MASON PARTY'S PRINCIPAL CONTACTS OVER NEXT FEW DAYS, AND WE PLAN REPORT FURTHER PARTICULARS THIS VISIT.
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